



PLANNING COMMISSION City of Cortland

MINUTES

February 22, 2010

A regular meeting of the City of Cortland Planning Commission was held on Monday, February 22, 2010 at 5:15 PM in the Council Chambers at City Hall, 25 Court Street, Cortland, New York.

PRESENT: Chair VanEtten, Comm. Hansen, McMahon, Ryan, Smith and Spitzer

Staff Present: Chief Glover and Cheryl Massmann, Deputy City Clerk

Chairman VanEtten welcomed Comm. Smith to the Commission.

Item No. 1 – Site Plan Review –106 N. Main St. – (Cortland SDA Church)(R4) – Shed

A church representative was present. He noted that they had wanted a twelve (12) foot by sixteen (16) foot shed out back to store items that currently are being stored on the stairs. A fire inspector indicated a need for a change from that practice. The shed is ten (10) foot off the back and side boundary lines. The big shed is built on concrete. He was unsure whether the old metal shed would stay or go. The new shed is almost completely built and will stay where it is.

A SEQR review was done.

On the motion by Comm. Hansen, seconded by Comm. McMahon, voted and approved to issue a negative declaration.

On a motion by Comm. McMahon, seconded by Comm. Spitzer, voted and approved the project as presented.

Item No. 2 – Site Plan Review – 92 Groton Ave. – (Seales)(GB) – Remodeling Rear Entrance and Fire Escape

Gary and Judd Seales were present. Gary Seales indicated that they wanted to build on the back of the house. He noted that the back doesn't match the sides of the building. He would like to remove the rear porch and part of staircase, which is the lower part of the fire escape. They then plan to rebuild the room and rebuild the fire escape. He noted that the footprint is one and a half (1 ½) feet wider than what is there now. His intention is to add another bedroom. He noted that there are currently eight (8) occupants and that number will stay at eight (8). He just wants to increase the livable space. He plans to put in a foundation. He noted that there were once ten (10) bedrooms and he has reduced the number of bedrooms to eight (8). He stated that there's enough parking in the rear of the building. He stated that he had gone before the Zoning Board of Appeals and had

received a variance to pave the parking area and to reduce the size of his parking spaces from ten (10) feet to eight and a half (8 ½) feet. He went on to state that County Planning and the Zoning Board of Appeals recommended the paving and striping of the parking area. He noted that it is currently gravel. He stated that the Zoning Board of Appeals handled the parking, paving and managed the drainage. Chair VanEtten asked how the drainage had been addressed as the Planning Commission was concerned about drainage. Chief Glover noted that there was no lot coverage issue for general business property. Chief Glover noted that the Zoning Board had recommended drainage to 92 Groton Avenue as there was a dry well there. Comm. McMahon was concerned about drainage to 92 Groton Avenue if that property should be sold. Judd Seales noted that the parking area could be drained to the buffer zone if the Planning Commission wished. Chief Glover discussed drainage options. Gary Seales noted that he would pitch the parking area toward the buffer zone. Chair VanEtten noted that he would like to see the drainage captured on site. Gary Seales stated that he would do that.

Chair VanEtten noted that the parking area had been included in the plans, but had not been part of the original site plan application. He polled the Commission and they indicated that they would like to add it to the site plan and deal with it tonight. Comm. Hansen asked if the snow storage area was the buffer zone. Gary Seales indicated that it was. Comm. Smith asked if this project should be noted as an expansion on the SEQR form. Judd Seales stated that this wasn't an increase. Chief Glover agreed that it was not an increase. Comm. McMahon noted that it actually was a decrease. Chair VanEtten noted that this project was a modification and an alteration. Gary Seales indicated that when the project was done, the back of the house would match the front of the house.

A SEQR review was done.

On the motion by Comm. McMahon, seconded by Comm. Hansen, voted and approved to issue a negative declaration.

On the motion by Comm. Hansen, seconded by Comm. Smith, voted and approved the project as presented including the approved Zoning Board of Appeals change in the width of the marked parking spots from ten (10) feet to eight and a half (8 ½) feet, the pitching of the parking lot drainage towards the buffer zone in the back and the deeding of a right of way from 94 Groton Avenue to 92 Groton Avenue to allow access.

Item No. 3 – Site Plan Review – 141 Groton Ave. – (CRMC)(R3) – Handicapped Ramp

Alistair Aitchison and Mr. Anderson were present. Mr. Aitchison stated that they wanted to add an ADA accessible ramp to the front of the building. He noted that this would be a concrete ramp with a landing at the top and the bottom. Comm. Hansen asked why the ramp didn't go parallel to the building to better access the parking lot. Mr. Aitchison noted that they wanted everything to go to the front of the building. Comm. Spitzer asked why they did not use the existing ramp in the rear only make it less steep. He felt that it would be less intrusive and it would better access the handicapped parking area. Mr. Anderson indicated that the rear ramp accessed a staff area and the front ramp would access the main entrance and the patient waiting area. Comm. Spitzer noted that the proposed ramp faced the Townley Street side of the building. Comm. Ryan felt that the ramp would look

better going to the side. Some concerns were expressed that people would try to pick up handicapped clients along the street rather than have them go back to the parking area. Chair VanEtten asked what the distance was from the building line to the sidewalk on Townley Street. Mr. Aitchison indicated that it was twenty-eight (28) feet. Comm. Smith asked where the proposed ramp connects to the parking lot. Mr. Aitchison indicated that the ramp went out to the sidewalk and the handicapped person would go along the sidewalk and up the driveway to the handicapped parking area. Chair VanEtten was uncomfortable about ADA people using the driveway to access the ramp. Mr. Anderson noted that the footings were already done. Chair VanEtten still expressed concerns about ADA folks have to get from the parking lot to the sidewalk. He wants space identified for handicapped parking spaces closer to the access point. Comms. Smith and Spitzer noted that they would like the fencing taken down. It was noted that the fencing blocks visibility and they would like them to put the access point from the proposed ramp to the handicapped parking area through where the fence is located. Chair VanEtten would also like to see curb stops or curbing installed.

A SEQR review was done.

On the motion by Comm. Ryan, seconded by Comm. Spitzer, voted and approved to issue a negative declaration.

On the motion by Comm. Spitzer, seconded by Comm. Ryan, voted and approved the application as presented with the revision to the paved area and to remove the fencing to allow direct access from the paved area from the front sidewalk on Townley Avenue and not through driveway.

Item No. 4 – Site Plan Review – 44 River St. – (Cortland Cable)(GI) – Cement Pads for LP Tanks

Walter Nyzio was present. He stated that they would like to build two (2) concrete pads, three (3) foot by three (3) foot to hold two (2) air conditioners. They are building a clean room complex on the inside of the manufacturing facility to accommodate an increase in military orders. Comm. Spitzer asked for the height of the concrete pads. Mr. Nyzio noted that they would be three and a half (3 ½) inches thick.

A SEQR review was done.

On the motion by Comm. Hansen, seconded by Comm. McMahon, voted and approved to issue a negative declaration.

On the motion by Comm. McMahon, seconded by Comm. Ryan, voted and approved the project as presented.

Item No. 5 – Preliminary Site Plan Review – 24-26 Pt. Watson St. – (Cortland Repertory)(GB)

Mr. John Folmer and Mr. Kirby Thompson were present to describe the project. The Cortland Repertory Theater has acquired the old bowling alley and they were here to

describe their planned uses of the building. Mr. Folmer stated that the Theater would not be leaving the pavilion at Little York Lake. He also stated that they will not compete with the Center for the Arts in Homer. They plan to keep their programs and schedules different so as not to compete with their performances. They also will not try to compete with the College.

Mr. Folmer noted a concern regarding taxes. He stated that they are a not for profit organization and this building will eventually come off of the tax rolls. He went on to explain that they will be selling their facility on Franklin Street which will hopefully be sold to a profit organization and will come back on the tax rolls. He noted that because they were a not for profit, that they would be required to pay the 2010 City taxes and the 2010 and 2011 school taxes. He hoped to not be creating additional tax exempt property, as the City has enough of that already.

Mr. Folmer stated that they did not believe that the Theater would be causing a problem with parking. He noted that there were two (2) parking lots available at this location. He noted that they had originally planned to open their box office in by May, but that is not going to be possible because of some problems with the utility program there. The plan was to use the front part of the building on Port Watson Street for box office and a lobby, they plan to use the middle of the building for an assembly area and possible rehearsal space. He stated that they currently rent rehearsal space and this will save them the cost of that rental. This may also provide them with a space for social activities and perhaps even some form of performance space during the winter months, usually their off season. He noted that it won't be of the caliber of the summer performances, but something. He also noted that some of the building will be used for the storage of costumes, props and the light construction of sets. He hoped that this move would encourage people to come downtown and to make the building more attractive and attract people to that area. He didn't feel that they would be causing any additional traffic problems. He noted that their plans extremely general, at this point. The Theater has yet to engage an engineer and develop a design that they want. When that has been done, they will come back to the Planning Commission. He asked if the Commissioners had any questions.

Comm. Spitzer noted that the former bowling alley entrance was on the side. He also noted that in the front there had been a hair salon and he wondered if the main entrance to their building would be in the front on Pt. Watson Street. Mr. Thompson stated that it was an issue with handicapped accessibility and they may have to put a door on the side to open into the lobby because there were two (2) steps to gain entrance to the Pt. Watson Street front doors. He felt that ramps were not practical in the front as there wasn't enough space. Mr. Thompson noted that there might only be one (1) door in the front. He also noted that there already was a side door to the building in place. Chair VanEtten liked the idea of a side ADA entrance. Mr. Folmer noted that when they first looked at the building, it had all of the bowling alley equipment in it and they thought it wasn't big enough for what they had in mind. He went on to state that now that the equipment had been removed, the building was huge. He noted that there were seventeen thousand (17,000) square feet of space in the building. Mr. Folmer also noted that there had once been a car dealership in the front of the building and in the front was the showroom. The floor is still the old octagonal tiles, a fireplace hearth and a wood paneled balcony that looks out over showroom area. They also have found an old tin ceiling in place which can be refurbished.

Mr. Thompson noted that they planned to have storage in the rear low part of the building and a possible theater area might be in the middle of the building because that is the highest part of the building, but that remains to be seen.

NEW BUSINESS

NYS Department of Transportation Communication with Tim Horton's Regarding Tree Removal

Chair VanEtten noted that he has received communication from the New York State Department of Transportation regarding the Tim Horton's and tree removal. He noted that the Planning Commission had wanted four (4) trees left along Clinton Avenue, however, due to blocked sight issues, two (2) of those trees had since been removed. He explained that now the NYSDOT has asked that the remaining two (2) trees be removed because of concerns that their root systems had been severely disturbed and that these two (2) trees would likely die and they would like them removed before closing the subject permit. He noted that their last DOT field visit was last summer and the trees had made it through that far. Corporation Counsel Walsh had indicated that the Planning Commission should draft a letter to the NYSDOT asking them to wait through the end of this summer and review the condition of the trees at that time. Comm. VanEtten noted that the initial Planning Commission discussion was they didn't want to remove any trees at this location, but they ceded that two (2) of them finally did have to be removed because of sight vision issues. He noted that the City's Landscape and Design Commission was in favor of leaving these trees. Chair VanEtten noted that the disturbance to the root systems of these trees had occurred in about the summer of 2008 and since it was almost the spring of 2010, he thought they should be allowed to go through another cycle. He noted that there had been concerns about the changing the character of this street and neighborhood with the removal of the trees. He stated that he would draft the letter. Chief Glover noted that apparently the DOT wanted all of the trees removed at this site and the trees are showing that they are doing just fine. Tim Horton's is not asking to have the trees removed.

On the motion of Comm. Ryan, seconded by Comm. Smith that the Planning Commission Chairperson write a letter to the NYSDOT requesting that the trees remain until the end of summer and that they review the condition of the trees at that time.

Minutes – January 25, 2010

On the motion by Comm. Hansen, seconded by Comm. McMahon, voted and approved.

New Business

Chair VanEtten noted that there was a flyer for a training session in Syracuse on March 4. Comm. Smith had already registered.

Comm. Hansen distributed copies of the Draft Comprehensive Plan for the City from Thoma Development. She noted that Rich Cunningham has asked that the Planning Commissioners to read through it and let him know of any changes or recommendations. If there is anything you would like to discuss with him, please let her know and she would

set up a meeting with him. She noted that this document represented about two (2) years of work.

Adjournment

On the motion by Comm. Spitzer and seconded by Comm. McMahon, voted and approved.

I, DOUGLAS VANETTEN, CHAIRPERSON OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF CORTLAND, NEW YORK, DO HEREBY CERTIFY THAT SAID RESOLUTION(S) WERE ADOPTED AT A MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF CORTLAND, NEW YORK, HELD ON THE 22nd DAY OF FEBRUARY 2010.

DOUGLAS VANETTEN, CHAIRPERSON